



American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
AFT Public Employees  
AFT Healthcare

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March 13, 2013

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 803, the Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act, as a reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. With an economy slowly recovering from a recession, it is vital that we provide job training and services to as many Americans as possible. If passed, H.R. 803 will have the opposite effect by block-granting critical programs, putting services for disadvantaged populations at risk, and limiting the participation of key stakeholders.

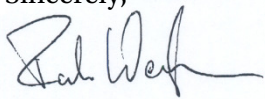
The federal government plays a critical role in leveling the playing field for those populations that are at highest risk of being unemployed, including youth farmworkers, dislocated workers and other disadvantaged populations. By block-granting programs designed to serve specific disadvantaged populations, H.R. 803 would dilute previously targeted programs. Instead of being directed to where they are most needed, funds under H.R. 803 would be given to states, giving governors total discretion on how to spend workforce funds, pitting groups against each other. By not maintaining a separate funding stream for these programs, H.R. 803 will undermine the services offered to the neediest populations under the WIA.

H.R. 803 would silence the voices of community stakeholders, including unions, community-based organizations and community colleges, on the state and local workforce investment boards that oversee training funds, by eliminating their reserved seats on these boards and by requiring two-thirds of the board to be composed of appointed business representatives. This is the wrong direction. If we are to meet the challenges of an ever-changing labor market in a global economy, the planning, design and implementation of workforce development programs must include the full participation of all stakeholders in the community.

The goal of Congress should be to rebuild a robust middle class by helping job seekers find work, businesses find workers, and workers access education, training and adequate guidance to obtain jobs that pay family-sustaining wages with benefits; the SKILLS Act, however, would do the exact opposite. Maintaining a workforce that is made up of healthy, highly skilled and highly educated workers is key to ensuring the growth of a prosperous society, and we urge Congress to consider this reality.

Thank you for considering the AFT's views on this very important matter. We urge you to oppose H.R. 803.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten", is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Randi Weingarten  
President

RW:emc opeiu#2 afl-cio